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V. — *Bellerophon's Tablet and the Homeric Question in the  
Light of Oriental Research*

BY PROFESSOR NATHANIEL SCHMIDT

CORNELL UNIVERSITY

IN the sixth book of the *Iliad*, Diomedes, son of Tydeus, goes forth to fight in single combat with the unknown champion of Troy. The valiant but circumspect Greek is anxious to know first of all whether his antagonist is a god or a man. It is dangerous to attack a divine being, as had been seen in the case of Lycurgus, the Thracian king, who opposed the cult of Dionysus and in consequence was stricken with blindness and did not long survive. Glaucus the Lycian, however, assures Diomedes that he belongs to the mortal race that comes upon the scene and passes away like the leaves of the trees in the forest, and yet to a noble family whose history for many generations may be worthy of record. He is the son of Hippolochus whom Bellerophon begat with a Lycian princess. This Bellerophon himself was a grandson of Sisyphus, ruler of Ephyra, or Corinth. A fugitive at the court of Proetus, king of Tiryns, he virtuously resisted the blandishments of the queen, Antaea, who was desperately in love with him, and was therefore accused by her of an attempt to seduce her. Unwilling, for religious reasons, to follow her counsel and put his guest to death, Proetus sent Bellerophon to his father-in-law, the king of Lycia, called Iobates in a later tradition, with "dire signs, having written in a folded tablet many soul-destroying things, which he ordered him to show to his father-in-law in order that he might perish":

πέμπε δέ μιν Λυκίηνδε, πόρην δ' ὃ γε σήματα λυγρὰ,  
γράφας ἐν πίνακι πτυκτῷ θυμοφθόρα πολλά·  
δεῖξαι δ' ἠνώγειν ᾧ πενθερῷ, ὅφρ' ἀπόλοιτο. — *Il.* vi, 168 ff.

The Lycian king entertained him nine days, and on the tenth asked for the message he brought from Proetus.

When the "evil sign" (σῆμα κακόν) had been delivered, the king sent him on various dangerous errands. He was commanded to put to death the Chimaera, to kill the Solymians, to slay the Amazons, and to run the risk of an ambush placed in his way. By his success Bellerophon proved that he was of divine origin (θεοῦ γόνος), became the son-in-law of Iobates, and received half of his kingdom. Having heard this story, Diomedes declares that an ancient guest-friendship exists between Glaucus and himself, since Bellerophon had once been the honored guest of his grandfather Oeneus. He proposes that neither of them shall fight with the other as long as the war shall last, and exchanges weapons. That Diomedes gains by the exchange arms of gold for arms of bronze, the value of a hundred bulls for that of nine, is ascribed to the act of Zeus, depriving Glaucus of ordinary prudence in the moment of excitement.

The question of supreme interest in this delightful episode concerns the character of Bellerophon's tablet. What did the poet mean by σήματα λυγρά, θυμοφθόρα πολλά, γράψας, and πάνταξ πτυκτός? Has the answer any bearing on the Homeric problem, and particularly on such important aspects of it as the age of the *Iliad* or the section containing this story, the knowledge and use of writing on the part of the author or authors, and the possible historic nucleus? And does our present measure of acquaintance with the period to which tradition ascribes the Trojan War, gained through Oriental sources, shed any light upon these questions?

There seems to be no allusion to Bellerophon's tablet in any Greek writer known to us before the Alexandrian period. Unfortunately, none of the papyri hitherto discovered contains the lines referring to it. The fragment preserved in *Oxyrhyncus Papyrus*, 445, begins with VI, 173. It is impossible, therefore, to know whether any copy circulating in Egypt lacked line 169, athetized by some modern diaskeuasts. From Eustathius, Apollonius, Apollodorus, and Codex Venetus we know that the great editors of Homer in Alexandria, Zenodotus of Ephesus, Aristophanes

of Byzantium, and Aristarchus of Samothrace, recognized the genuineness of the present text. The earliest comments on this text are those of Aristarchus, best preserved in the great Venetian codex published by Viloison, and more briefly in the lexical treatise of Apollonius. He maintains, apparently against Zenodotus, who seems to have insisted that letters (τῆς λέξεως γράμματα) must be meant, his conclusion that the words should not be so understood, but that γράφας is to be explained by ξέσαι, 'engrave, incise,' and that consequently Proetus traced images which his father-in-law would understand: ἡ διπλῇ, ὅτι ἔμφασίς ἐστι τοῖς τῆς λέξεως γράμμασι χρῆσθαι. οὐ δέι δὲ τοῦτο δέξασθαι. ἀλλ' ἐστὶ γράφαι τὸ ξέσαι. οἶον οὖν ἐγχαράξας εἰδῶλα δι' ὧν ἔδει γινῶναι τὸν πενθερὸν τοῦ Προίτου. Again (on line 178) he insists that "he says signs, not letters; he therefore engraved images": ἡ διπλῇ, ὅτι σημεῖα λέγει, οὐ γράμματα. εἰδῶλα ἄρα ἐνέγραψεν. It is natural that Aristarchus, who was familiar with the sight of Egyptian hieroglyphics, should have concluded that the poet thought of such signs. Whether or not he knew that a number of the Egyptian hieroglyphics had a fixed alphabetical value, he could not be ignorant of the fact that the εἰδῶλα, or images of men, beasts, birds, snakes, and other objects he saw on temple walls represented a system of writing by which it was possible to express whatever one wished. Such or similar signs may well have been employed by Proetus; but they were not γράμματα, not letters like those he used himself.

On the other hand, Apollodorus declares that Proetus gave to Bellerophon letters to bear to Iobates in which he had written to him to kill Bellerophon; and when Iobates had learned their contents he gave his orders to him: Προῖτος ἔδωκεν ἐπιστολὰς αὐτῷ πρὸς Ἰοβάτην κομίσειν, ἐν αἷς ἐνεγέγραπτο, Βελλεροφόντην ἀποκτείνειν. Ἰοβάτης δὲ ἐπιγνοὺς ἐπέταξεν (*Bibl.* II, 3, 1). Homer's words clearly conveyed to his mind the idea of a letter written in Greek characters. Wolf denied this (*Prolegomena*, 74), and brought forth as his strongest argument, capable of settling every doubt, the fact

that ἐπιγινῶναι means 'to know,' and not 'to read,' which is ἀναγινῶναι. This is, of course, correct, but altogether irrelevant. There is no reason why he should have used the one verb rather than the other. When Iobates had learned what Proetus wished him to know, he gave his commands. That he learned this through reading the letter is understood. It is not even necessary to suppose that Apollodorus desired to suggest that the letter was interpreted to him; he no doubt assumed that, if a letter was sent to the Lycian king by his son-in-law, he would be able to read it himself. In Athens there was nothing to lead one's thought to hieroglyphics.

As regards the folded tablet we have no comment that can with certainty be ascribed to the great Alexandrian critic. It is impossible to say whether any of the scholia collected by Eustathius in the twelfth century from such commentators as Apion, Herodorus, Demosthenes the Thracian, Porphyry, and others, go back to the schools of Aristarchus and Crates of Mallos. One of them gives an example of philosophical interpretation that reminds us of the latter; and there is a philological scholium not unworthy of the former. In this scholium the πίναξ is explained as a wooden tablet, σανίς or ξυλάριος, and the πτυκτός is referred to a custom of joining two boards together. But πτυκτός is also used of tablets of brass or of stone. The πίναξ is further supposed to be like a δέλτος or δελτίον, so named because it is triangular and in the shape of the letter delta. Of special interest is the remark that the ancient Greeks, like the Egyptians and in later times the Scythians, used animal forms and other characters as hieroglyphics which could be read to express whatever they wished, engraving them on wooden tablets. Pliny, *H. N.* XIII, 20, mentions the use of *pugillares*, or thin pieces of wood, before the Trojan War, and declares that Bellerophon was given such *codicilli* (i.e. *pugillares*) and not *epistolae*.

The allusion of Cicero, *de Or.* III, 137, to the work of Pisistratus in arranging the disordered books of Homer, that of Aelian, *V.H.* XIII, 14, to his bringing the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*

together in their present form, and of Pausanias, VII, 26, to his collecting the verses of Homer, but above all the statement of Josephus, *contra Apionem*, I, 2, that, according to a widely prevalent and probable opinion, the Greeks did not use their letters at the time of the Trojan War, and that there were even those who said that Homer did not leave his poems in writing, but their memory was preserved in song, and they were put together afterward, — all these could not help exercising a profound influence on later scholars. Perizonius, *Animadversiones historicae* (1684), drew the conclusion from Aelian and Josephus that the art of writing became known long after Homer's time, the songs were preserved orally, and Pisistratus brought them together. François Hedelin Abbé d'Aubignac in 1715 added the thought that Homer may never have existed. He is greeted as the "father of Homeric criticism" by Finsler, *Homer in der Neuzeit* (1912). Giovanni Battista Vico, *Principi di scienza nuova* (1726), likewise denied the historical existence of Homer, and made Pisistratus the collector and publisher. Blackwell, *Inquiry into the Life and Writings of Homer* (1735, 3d ed. 1757), and Robert Wood, *Essay on the Original Genius of Homer* (1769), following the same line of thought, are obliged to look upon Bellerophon's tablet as proving that Homer's time knew no writing, but only symbolical or pictographic representations. Jean Jacques Rousseau, *Sur l'origine des langues* (1782), expressed the conviction that the whole section dealing with Glaucus and Diomedes was an interpolation, on account of the allusion to the tablet and the consequent knowledge of writing before the Trojan War. Antoine Goguet, *De l'origine des lois* (1758), was at least certain that the heroes did not know the art of writing, so that the signs on Proetus' tablet could only be hieroglyphics.

The leading factors in the argument of F. A. Wolf, *Prolegomena ad Homerum* (1795) — ignorance of writing in the age of Homer, oral transmission and gradual growth of the poems, and committal to writing for the first time by Pisistratus — had already been reached by a number of men. In

regard to Bellerophon, Wolf looked upon the signs as hieroglyphics, symbols, cut into a sealed wooden tablet. There was little that was new in the *Prolegomena*, but the mastery of the material, the distinctness of the views, and the fascinating style made a strong and lasting impression. Some of his followers went beyond him, both in respect to the fundamental questions and with reference to the Bellerophon passage, in the interpretation of which the general attitude is so apt to express itself. Bothe (1832), Crusius (1857), Arnold (1864), and many others suggested that the carved symbols in the wooden tablet might be such as Proetus and Iobates had secretly agreed upon using; Grote still in 1862 regarded the incised symbols on Bellerophon's tablet as the best evidence that the art of writing was unknown in the Greek world before the sixth century.

Especially in the last generation there has been a marked reaction against the position of Wolf and his school, caused chiefly by the results of the excavations in Greece, Troy, and Crete. The idea of cryptographic, symbolical, esoteric signs has been wholly abandoned. Nor does the view of Apollodorus, followed by many others down to recent times, find any important defender at present. Though we have some inscriptions that go back to about 700 B.C., and references in Greek sources that need not be doubted to inscriptions almost a century older, a suggestion that the Greek alphabet was in use before the Trojan War is not readily entertained. Even those who, like Vigilio Inama, *Omero nell' età micenea* (Milan, 1913), would place the poet at the end of the Mycenaean Age, about 1100 B.C., and make him write his masterpieces then in the Achæan dialect, do not think of his using the Greek alphabet, but rather some script of the same nature as those found in Crete. It is the interpretation of Aristarchus which in a modified form is gaining the assent of scholars. While Paley in 1866 still spoke of "some kind of a writing," Stier in 1886 suggested the Cypriote syllabic script, Leaf in 1900 thought of a Cretan script, and so Seymour, *Life in the Homeric Age* (1909), and Van

Leeuwen in his great edition of 1912. What with thousands of inscriptions found in Crete, hundreds in Cyprus, and a considerable number in Mycenae in the Peloponnesus, Menidhi in Attica, and Orchomenus on Lake Copais in Boeotia, it is not difficult to accept the verdict of Van Leeuwen: "ars scribendi in Graecia saeculis aliquot — fortasse multis — ante poetarum illorum aetatem fuit cognita."

But the question never seems to have been raised whether our recent discoveries in the East, so eagerly exploited to help in the decision as to the *σήματα*, may not also throw some light upon the *πίναξ πτυκτός*. The double tablet of wood figures in all discussions. It has not been thought necessary to inquire what kind of tablets were actually used in the thirteenth century B.C. in the lands around the Eastern Mediterranean. Has not a scholiast informed us that what he called a *δέλτος* or *δελτίον* was called by Homer a *πίναξ*, and that such wooden *πίνακες* were used in ancient times by Greeks as well as by Egyptians and Scythians? All the world knows the story told by Herodotus of Demaretes who sent from Susa a *πίναξ πτυκτός* (*duplicata tabella*) to the Lacedaemonians, revealing the plan of Xerxes, and how he scraped off the wax, inscribed the tablet, and then covered the text with wax again so that the bearer of the nude tablet might not be molested by the guards (VII, 239). There seemed to be room only for a difference of opinion as to whether or not Proetus waxed his *pugillares*.

But there is a startling fact that deserves serious consideration. In the centuries immediately preceding the traditional date of the Trojan War, thousands of tablets containing written messages were sent from place to place, from land to land. But they were not wooden tablets; they were clay tablets. Not only did swift messengers speed with these tablets of clay from city to city in the valleys of the Euphrates and the Tigris, and between Elam, Babylonia, Mesopotamia, Gutium, and Assyria, but between Egypt and the Syrian dynasts, Cyprus, Mitani, and Arzawi, between Hatti, the capital of the Hittites in Asia Minor, and their Amoritish



vassals in Syria, and between the same capital and the rulers of Mesopotamia, Assyria, Babylonia, and Egypt. In Crete, where various scripts were used, one hieroglyphic and another linear, as well as also the clearly Philistine script of the Phaestus disk, the clay tablet was apparently the favorite form of a letter or document, while wooden tablets, with or without wax, do not seem to have been used. If a tablet is referred to in the Mycenaean Age, the presumption is overwhelmingly in favor of a clay tablet. Now what would a *πίναξ πτυκτός* be in that age? Even this question may be answered today. In every large collection of cuneiform tablets, and in many small ones, there are *duplicatae tabellae*. Those at Cornell come from the Hammurapi period. They are, for the most part, legal or business documents. First a tablet was inscribed with the original draft, then after it had been dried in the sun — it is scarcely to be assumed that it was baked — another lump of soft clay was folded over it, and a duplicate of the original text, or a summary of it, was inscribed. Of still greater importance is the fact that many such folded tablets have on the outside only the name and address of the person to whom the communication is directed. They are sealed and addressed letters, and the outer covering serves as an envelope. Such tablets exist in the museum of the University of Pennsylvania, according to the testimony of Mr. Chiera. This is the only *πίναξ πτυκτός* that seems to have been in use in the Near East in the period preceding the Trojan War.

Is it likely that this double tablet of clay could have found its way to Lycia and the Peloponnesus? The world that used the cuneiform script as well as the clay tablet drew near to Lycia and the Aegean at various times. Thus the Cappadocian tablets show us that as early as the middle of the third millennium B.C. Assyria had pushed her way into Asia Minor, how far west we cannot tell. At Boghaz-keui the Hittite Empire reveals the strong influence of Babylonia in the adoption for certain purposes of the cuneiform writing and even the Babylonian language. How far towards the

southwest corner of Asia Minor this Hittite Empire spread its power cannot yet be determined. But it is evident that Lycia could be reached from this direction. Again, Babylonian speech and script went into Egypt, as the Tell el Amarna correspondence shows. On the other hand, the Lycians and the Achaeans of the Peloponnesus were participants in raids that brought them to Egypt and elsewhere. In the first part of the fourteenth century the Lukki, or Lycians, appear in the Amarna tablets; in the reign of Ramses II (c. 1310-1244) the Lukiu appear with the Dardanians, Ionians (Yawana), Cilicians, Pedasians, and possibly Mysians; in the time of Mer en Ptah (c. 1244-1232) the Lycians appear with the Etruscans (Tursha), Sardinians (Shardani), Achaeans (Akaiwasha), and Sikeli (Shakalisha). Neither Lycians nor Achaeans are mentioned in the time of Ramses III (c. 1204-1169), when Philistines, Sicilians, Sardinians, and probably Danai, Teucrians, and Oscans are referred to as invading Egypt. It may not be without significance that they were not taking part in the raid on Egypt, if at that very time they were fighting about the walls of Troy. Half a century before, the Lycians had fought side by side with Ionians and Dardanians in one expedition, and with Achaeans in another.

In view of these references to the Lycians in trustworthy historic sources Beloch's theory (*Griechische Geschichte*<sup>2</sup> [1912], I, I, 184) that the epic gives to the Termilae and their land mythical names meaning 'light-bringers' and 'land of light' lacks all foundation. It is possible that the Lycians came to the high plateau of Milyas and the banks of the Xanthus from Crete, as Herodotus states (I, 73; VII, 92), but also that this tradition represents the memory of a return of Lycians to Asia Minor after an attempt to settle in Crete. A similar effort on the part of Danai to establish themselves in Egypt seems to have given rise to the story of the Danaides. Whether the whole people once lived in Crete or an important colony returned from there after a more or less prolonged stay, Lycians would have gained

familiarity with writing and with the use of clay tablets. The Achaeans and the Ionians may have sent colonies to Asia Minor long before the twelfth century, as Eduard Meyer suggests. This would account for their union with Dardanians and Lycians in the expeditions against Egypt, and the early appearance of the name Ionians (*Yawana*) which spread to all eastern nations. The story of Bellerophon may reflect the consciousness of a foreign Achaean strain in the population of Lycia, and the services rendered by this Achaean element in subduing the Solymians, an earlier people driven into the mountains. Perhaps the chief channel through which Babylonian and Assyrian influence may have come to the Lycians was the neighboring Hittite Empire. In the beginning of the twelfth century three great empires seem to have collapsed, the Egyptian, the Hittite, and the Minoan. Fifty years earlier they still maintained their political power, as the Boghaz-keui letters and the Egyptian accounts show, and the archaeological evidence in Crete appears to indicate. Movements of population, war-like expeditions, and colonizations were obviously among the causes of this momentous change.

There is a disposition today on all sides to place among the historic events of that period the siege of Troy, the great struggle between the king of Mycenae and his allies in Greece on the one hand and the king of the Trojans and his allies in Asia Minor on the other. Among the latter allies were the Lycians. No improbability attaches to the sending of a letter by an Achaean king to his kinsman, the king of Lycia, two generations before the Trojan War. The very fact that it is called a "folded tablet" adds to the plausibility. Whether the story has any basis in historic fact is another matter. The presence of the Chimaera and the Amazons warns us that Bellerophon may indeed be of divine origin (*θεοῦ γένος*). But this would not show that the Solymians also belong to the realm of myth, or that a Lycian warrior in the Trojan camp may not have had Greek blood in his veins. There are critics who believe that Priam is the actual

name of the king of Troy, while Agamemnon is a god. Perhaps they are right. The mythical and the historical are often within elbow touch of each other. Arta Hîpa of Jerusalem who begs Ikh-n-Aton for help and troops is a historic personage. Does Melchizedek of Salem, who gives tithes to Abram the Hebrew, also belong to history? The story of Micah's shrine in Mount Ephraim may be true in every detail, and yet Samson be nothing but a solar hero.

If the story of Bellerophon's tablet is read in the light of conditions we now know to have existed at the end of the Mycenaean Age, a puzzling question arises. How could a communication, so foreign to a later time, in a strange system of writing, on a material not used in subsequent periods, and handled in a most peculiar manner, become known to the poet? What could have led him to tell the tale in this fashion? To suppose that he invented it with his own imagination implies too heavy a strain on ours. It would be little short of miraculous, if, as some still think, the art of writing was wholly unknown to him. This, however, may be regarded as an exploded notion. Whether or not he knew how to write himself, Greeks had known how to express their thoughts in writing centuries before he composed his songs. He does not indeed mention writing anywhere else. Why should he be expected to do so? A careful perusal of such works as Apollonius' *Argonautica*, Vergil's *Aeneid*, Lucan's *Pharsalia*, Silius' *Punica* Statius' *Thebaid*, Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata*, Camoens' *Lusiadas*, Milton's *Paradise Lost*, the *Mahabharata*, the *Ramayana*, the *Kalevala*, with a view to discovering allusions to writing, brings home the conviction that epic poets, excogitating their verses, pen in hand, very rarely think of mentioning the gentle art they so constantly practise. There may not have been any conscious avoidance on the part of Homer. He had no occasion elsewhere to refer to writing. Van Leeuwen well answers those who express a surprise that a Homer familiar with writing should not have seen to it that some letters were sent from Troy to Peloponnesus, by asking

why an illiterate Homer should not have sent messengers with oral greetings. The strangeness of touch every critic has felt in VI, 168 ff. is not at all likely to be due to an unlettered man's awkwardness in describing a thing he does not know, but rather to the difficulty in presenting a process no longer used and not easily imagined. The farther the poet is from the time whose customs he depicts, the fainter becomes the survival of these customs in memory.

In estimating the time when a poet could have written a great work like the *Iliad*, the mistake has usually been made of relying solely on epigraphic material. This is done not only by Wolf and his followers but also by their opponents. Granted that we have no inscriptions earlier than 700 B.C. and no reliable testimony concerning any inscriptions earlier than the first Olympiad, does this show conclusively that writing cannot have flourished before that time, even in the same alphabet? By no means. The earliest Hebrew inscriptions we have are those on jars belonging apparently to king Ahab (c. 872-853); and if the doubtful Hiram and Jeroboam inscriptions are left out, the Ahab inscriptions are older than any written in the North Semitic alphabet, such as the inscriptions of Mesha', Kilamu, and Zakir. Yet alphabetic writing was used for all kinds of purposes centuries before Ahab's time. Bellerophon's tablet has often been called a Uriah letter. The letter that sent Uriah the Hittite to his death was dispatched by David, whose reign can scarcely be later than about 1033-993. This letter was written toward the end of the eleventh century. More important, however, is the fact that it is referred to in a historic document of very remarkable character, namely, II Sam. 9-20, I Kings, 1-2. It is recognized practically by all critics that this account of David's life in Jerusalem was written by a contemporary. Some have gone so far as to ascribe it to a definite person, such as Ahimaaz or Abiathar. It is an extraordinarily fine piece of historic writing, sympathetic and respectful in demeanor, yet objective and fearless in its statement of facts, free from long speeches and miraculous tales,

yet of sufficient epic breadth, full of pathos, earnestness, and sincerity. Eduard Meyer, a good judge in such matters, has paid an eloquent and just tribute to this historical writer who composed his work about 1000 B.C. And this book, respectable in size, appearing more than a century before our earliest dateable Hebrew inscription, is written in prose, excellent prose! The material may have been tanned skins of sheep or goats or papyrus. Zakar Baal of Byblos (*c.* 1100 B.C.) receives from Egypt papyrus rolls, and "the journal of his fathers" was probably written on such, one would like to know in what script. When the Songs of Conquest (Num. 21), which may go back to the fifteenth century, and the Song of Deborah (*c.* 1250 B.C.) were committed to writing cannot be determined. The present writer has long believed that the Semitic alphabet was developed in Palestine from signs the Philistines brought with them from Crete in two forms, the northern and the southern. In that case, the invention cannot be earlier than 1200 B.C. (*cf.* my article "Alphabet" in the *New International Encyclopedia*<sup>2</sup>, 1914). The possibility, however, must be reckoned with that the alphabet is of Canaanitish origin, and that the Philistines dropped their own script and adopted it when they settled in the land afterwards named after them.

In view of this condition in Syria, we may well ask ourselves whether something similar did not take place in Greece and on the coasts of the Aegean. Here, too, there is likely to have been much literary activity before the date of the earliest inscriptions that accidentally have become known to us. Judging from the Palestinian analogy, it would not be in the least hazardous to assume that a poet living in Smyrna in the middle of the ninth century could have written any poem he was able to compose. In fact, it is the length, and not the shortness, of the distance that separates Herodotus' date for Homer (*c.* 850) from Eratosthenes' date for the Trojan War (1184 B.C.) or that of the Paris marble (1206), which makes the thoughtful student pause. The poet obviously looks back to a past time, he is not describing his own;

and Inama's attempt to locate him in the beginning of the eleventh century is not convincing. At the same time the poet is not a learned archaeologist and least of all a modern artist with a cultivated historic sense, careful of preserving the color of place and time. How could he then look through three centuries and a half and see so clearly the condition of things at the end of the Mycenaean Age, which excavations and inscriptions of other peoples have presented to us? Two answers are possible. Herodotus may be wrong, and Homer may have lived long before the ninth century. Or Homer may have used earlier sources. The latter seems the more probable view. Some of these may have come down by oral transmission; others may have been accessible to him in written form. It is also to be remembered that there probably was no such abrupt break between the two periods as has been imagined. Much no doubt survived in the ninth century which seems to us peculiar to the Mycenaean Age. To some extent that may be true even of the *πίναξ πτυκτός*. Clay tablets were used in Palestine, as the excavations have shown, possibly as late as the seventh century, though as yet we have no evidence of the Hebrew language or the Semitic alphabet being used in them. So in Asia Minor and in Greece these tablets may not for some time have given place to the wooden *δελτίον* of the fifth century.

If the *Iliad* is essentially the work of Homer, as distinguished specialists are beginning again to believe, it is of course possible that it has suffered greatly in transmission, in spite of the preservative influence of the hexameter, which could never be lost sight of as has been the case with the meter of Hebrew poetry to the serious damage of the text. There may, no doubt, be many interpolations. Rousseau's suggestion, quoted with approval by Wolf, that the whole episode of Glaucus and Diomedes is such an interpolation, has already been mentioned. His reason was Homer's supposed ignorance of writing. The reference in the episode to the Dionysus cult (130 ff.) has since been noticed as a mark of late date. In this instance, however, it is in Thrace,

not in Greece, that the Dionysiac cult is celebrated and the unsuccessful attempt is made to repudiate it; and it is the danger of fighting a foreign, not a Greek, divinity that is cited in justification of Diomedes' unwillingness to run the risk of a combat with a Lycian god. It must be admitted that his anxiety, on this occasion, not to fight with a god is inconsistent with his previous battles with gods. But just as the inconsistencies between the Ship Catalogue and the Doloneia (especially x, 428 ff.), pointed out by Niese, *Der homerische Schiffskatalog* (1873), 50 f., are of far less importance than the external testimony of the Egyptian inscriptions to a sort of federation, or at least concerted action, of the very peoples mentioned as the allies of Troy, so the references to Lycians and Achaeans in the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries and the natural interpretation of Bellerophon's tablet would seem to weigh more than such petty inconcinnities as may well have escaped the notice of the poet himself — *si quandoque dormitat pater Homerus*.